

I want to take this opportunity to talk a little bit about the county's proposed \$449 million Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 budget.

The proposed FY 2012 budget is \$11 million more than the \$438 million approved FY 2011 budget, but this Board of County Commissioners (Board) is about putting Frederick County in a position of financial strength immediately and for the future. The budget does not include any pay raises for county employees for a third consecutive year. It does include a downgrade/reduction/elimination of 7% of the county's workforce- 175 positions - 106 of which were filled (real humans losing their jobs). The remaining positions were eliminated either through attrition or retirements.

No one took pleasure in this action but it is what needed to be done. While the county should have been cutting back in 2007 when the economy took a turn for the worse, the commissioners at the time actually added over 300 new positions from 2007 to 2009. The proposed FY 2012 budget does not raise property taxes or the fire tax and it eliminates several burdensome and absurd fees put on our residents. Such as a \$65 permit to replace a dishwasher, garbage disposal and/or a hot water heater. The proposed FY 2012 budget does not rob Peter to pay Paul, as was done in the previous budgets, such as transferring funds from the recordation tax, the fire tax and the bond enhancement fund to balance the general fund.

The proposed FY 2012 budget does fund the required State level of Maintenance of Effort to the Board of Education. I want to applaud the elected Board of Education for balancing their budget, while assuming half of the county's deficit since they receive half of the county's budget. The budget does fund the other essential services to the appropriate levels needed. I want to publicly acknowledge the Frederick County Sheriff's Office for doing a great job.

Every citizen is witnessing what is going on with pension plans, benefits and unfunded liabilities within government budgets across the country and the concern about how they are not self sustaining. Frederick County's pension plan is about 80% funded that is the amount recommended by financial advisors to be the safe level. With the commitment by previous Boards, the OPEB (Other Post Employee Benefits) Trust Fund, better known as funding for retiree health care, was recommended to be funded with a five-year ramp-up. That ramp-up is now fully funded, putting us on a sustainable and relatively flat funding level for the foreseeable future. Benefits for future employees have been changed and adjusted to reflect what is going on in the economy and lowering the OPEB debt going forward.

Is this budget perfect? No. Is there more work to do? Yes! But it points us in the right direction for the future; putting us in a position of strength and giving us the ability to reduce taxes and fees for our residents. That is our goal and what we were elected to do.

Your feed back is always welcomed. You can e-mail me at byoung@frederickcountymd.gov or call my personal cell phone at 301.748.3218.

Blaine Young, Commissioner President
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